



ROAD TO RECOVERY

A Tale of Three Counties – Revisited

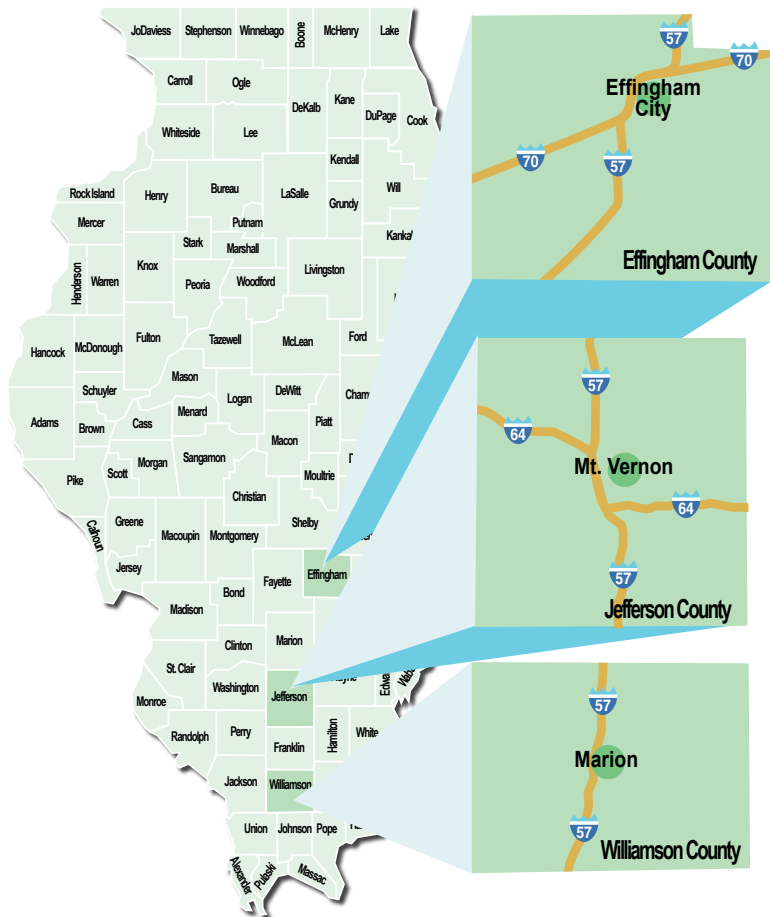
by Dennis Hoffman

An Illinois Labor Market Review article written in 1996 predicted employment growth and a positive economic future for three southern Illinois counties. The three counties, Effingham, Jefferson and Williamson shared several common economic traits. Thus, would a 2013 review of IDES data and U.S. Bureau of the Census data reveal growth over the past two decades and also predict future continued expansion? Common

characteristics of these three counties include being located in the central corridor of the State; having access to two interstate highways; and having a central commercial city with a population between 12,000 and 17,000.

Population:

All three counties experienced population growth from 1980 to 2010 according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Effingham County's population



Effingham, Jefferson and Williamson counties in Illinois

increased by 3,300 or 10.7 percent. Jefferson County gained 2,280 residents or 6.2 percent. Williamson County's population increased by nearly 10,000 or 17.4 percent. Williamson County has experienced the most steady and significant population growth of the three counties. Effingham County's

population appears to have leveled off during the past few years while Jefferson County's population has actually dropped moderately during the past ten years. The increase in population primarily appears to have been after 1970 when the North-South Interstate 57 was completed and other

East-West interstates were either under construction or completed (*See Chart 1A: Population 1970 to 2010*). Before the 1970s when the interstate system had not yet been developed, population in these three counties was either generally stable or had declined during some decades from 1930 to 1970 (*See Chart 1B: Population 1930 to 1970*). The significant population growth during the past several decades provides additional evidence of the importance of the interstate system near a community. Also, in all three counties additional exit ramps have been added over the years. Currently, a major road construction project which will add a third lane to the interstate is underway in all three communities.

More Firms – More Jobs:

The number of private firms and total private employment steadily increased from 1981 to 2012 in all three counties. This trend is easily apparent with a short visit to any of the three central communities of Effingham, Mt. Vernon and Marion. Retail stores, restaurants, health care facilities and professional businesses have developed and expanded near the interstates. Other industrial groups in which substantial growth have occurred include transportation, warehousing,

Chart 1A: Population 1970-2010

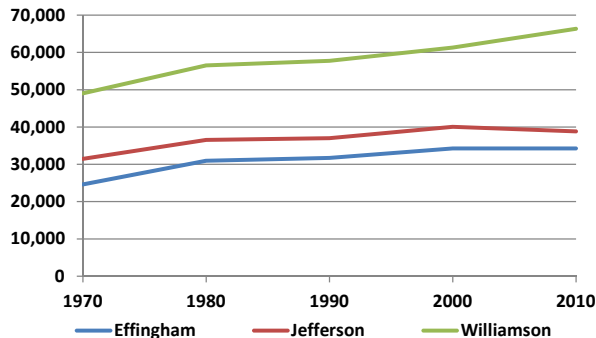
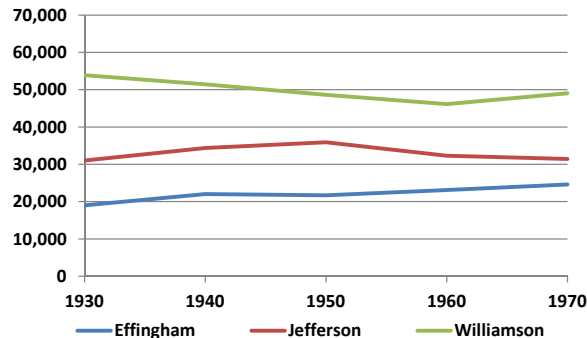
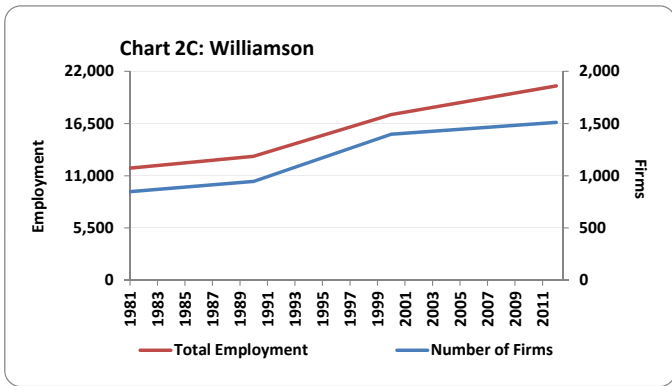
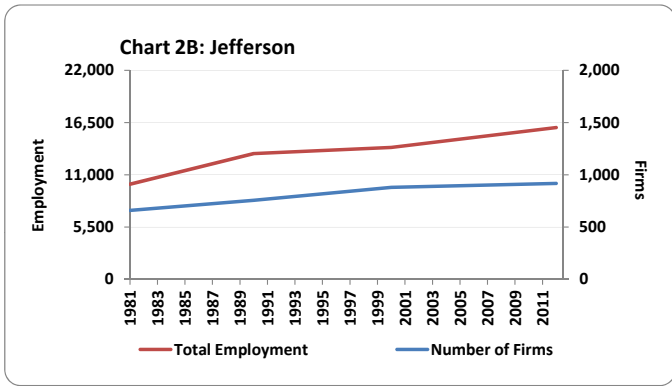
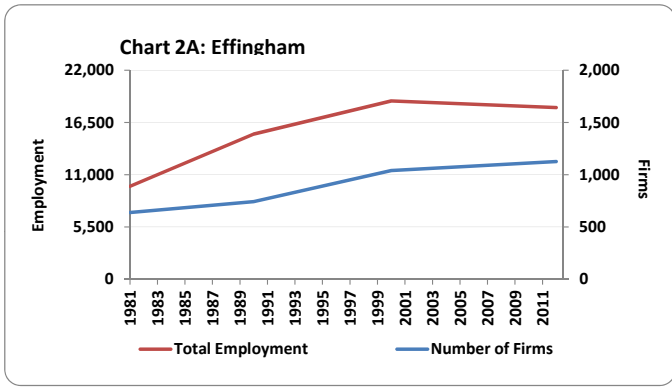


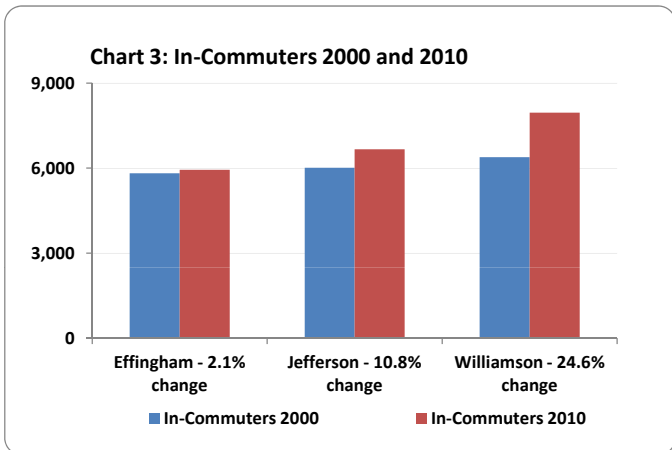
Chart 1B: Population 1930 – 1970



Source: Population - U. S. Bureau of the Census



Source: IDES/E.I.&A. Division, Quarterly Report of Establishments and Employment/Illinois at Work



Source: Commuting Patterns - U.S. Bureau of the Census

wholesale trade, leisure-hospitality, and personal services.

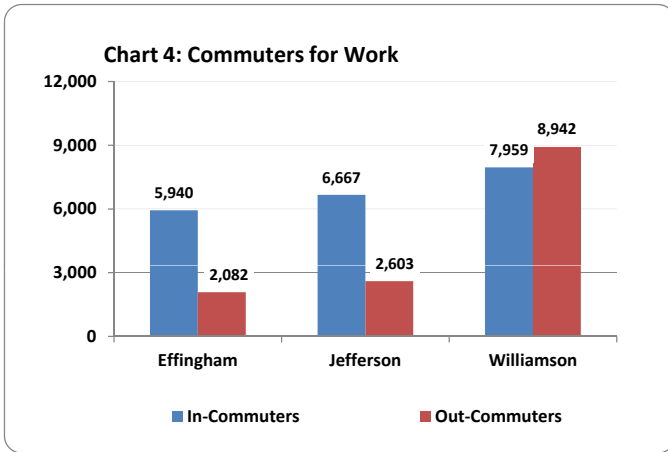
During the past thirty years, the number of private firms in Effingham County increased by 490 with a gain of 8,290 workers; in Jefferson County the increase in private establishments was 260 with a gain of nearly 6,000 jobs; and in Williamson County the increase in private firms was 660 with an employment gain of 8,660. Undoubtedly, significant employment and establishment growth has occurred since 1981 in these three counties according to the data compiled by the IDES, Economic Information & Analysis Division. (See *Chart 2A-2C: Private Establishments and Employment*).

Commuting:

As employment and the number of businesses expanded, commuting for work continued to dramatically increase to these three counties with central cities. The number of in-commuters for work increased steadily from 2000 to 2010 according

to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In-commuting increased by 2.1 percent to Effingham County; 10.8 percent to Jefferson County; and 24.6 percent to Williamson County. In addition the out-commuting also increased in Effingham County by 21.1 percent and in Williamson County by 3.9 percent. However, out-commuting decreased in Jefferson County by -16.7 percent during the past ten years. Clearly the amount of traffic to and from work has significantly increased during the first decade of the twenty-first century. (See *Chart 3: In-Commuters 2000-2010*.)

Effingham and Jefferson Counties are strong in-commuting areas with thousands more in-commuters compared to out-commuters. Effingham has 5,940 in-commuters versus 2,080 out-commuters. Over 900 daily commuters to Effingham County are from Fayette, Shelby, Jasper and Cumberland counties. Jefferson County, with 6,670 in-commuters versus 2,600 out-commuters, has over 600 daily commuters from Marion, Franklin, Hamilton, and Wayne counties. Williamson County is the exception with 7,969 in-commuters compared to 8,940 out-commuters. Nearly 4,700 Williamson County residents commute to nearby Jackson County which has the largest employer in Southern Illinois – Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Route 13 between Jackson and Williamson County is a rapidly developing and heavily traveled four-lane highway connecting numerous communities including Marion and Carbondale. However, there are still over 900 in-commuters to Williamson County from Franklin, Jackson, and Saline counties. (See *Chart 4:*



Source: Commuting Patterns - U.S. Bureau of the Census

Commuters for work – 2010 and Table 1A, 1B, and 1C – Commuting Patterns 2010).

Interstate Highways:

All three counties and the central cities have easy and significant interstate access both North-South and East-West. Interstate 57 which runs the length of the state passes through the cities of Effingham, Mt. Vernon, and Marion. Interstate 70 runs East-West through Effingham while Interstate 64

runs East-West through Mt. Vernon. Marion in Williamson County benefits from an East-West Interstate-24 which begins several miles south of town in addition to the four-lane East-West connector Route 13 to Jackson and Saline Counties. Over the past forty years, additional exits have

been opened at the three communities and currently, major I-57 additional lane road expansions are underway. The importance of the interstate system near a community should not be downplayed as easy access to the interstates may be the most important factor for the economic development of a community.

Table 1B: Jefferson County

In-Commuters from the Following Counties to Jefferson

Marion	1,618
Franklin	1,411
Hamilton	705
Wayne	643
Washington	574
Williamson	410
Perry	282
Clinton	202
Jackson	219
White	122

Jefferson Residents Out-Commuting to Following Counties

Marion	829
Washington	363
Franklin	312
Wayne	116
St. Clair	114
Williamson	111
Clinton	106
Hamilton	88

Summary:

The similar favorable demographics in all three counties have contributed to the growth of the communities over the past several decades. These interstate highway counties with a medium-sized city along a central corridor have grown in population, employment, and the number of businesses. The interstate system has enabled easier commutes for work, recreation, shopping, and other needed services for the commercial centers of Effingham, Mt. Vernon, and Marion. The 2010 Census establishes that these three counties have developed into multi-county regional centers and that this economic growth and expansion trend should continue in the 21st century.

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Table 1A: Effingham County

In-Commuters from the Following Counties to Effingham

Fayette	1,407
Shelby	1,023
Jasper	976
Cumberland	919
Coles	502
Clay	463
Marion	109

Effingham Residents Out-Commuting to Following Counties

Coles	502
Fayette	396
Jasper	193
Shelby	118
Cumberland	93

Table 1C: Williamson County

In-Commuters from the Following Counties to Williamson

Franklin	2,905
Jackson	1,832
Saline	944
Johnson	654
Union	491
Perry	344
Jefferson	111

Williamson Residents Out-Commuting to Following Counties

Jackson	4,672
Franklin	1,421
Saline	693
Jefferson	410
Perry	206
Union	205
Johnson	178
Massac	122

Source: Commuting Patterns - U.S. Bureau of the Census